Graphic novels: An alternative approach to teach English as a foreign language[1]

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Abstract

This article reports the findings of a study that investigated the role of graphic novels in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to International Baccalaureate students (aged 15-16) in TED Ankara College Foundation Private High School. Two intact 10th grade classes were randomly assigned to the control and experimental groups who studied the play of *Macbeth* for various in-class activities. A questionnaire, semi-structured interview and achievement test (post-test) were employed to gather data from the participants. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the scores of the participants in the experimental and control groups, with the graphic novel playing a significant role in understanding (i) literature elements such as symbol, setting and foreshadowing, (ii) inference and (iii) vocabulary. However, it did not play a significant role in answering comprehension questions, discussing quotations, and analysing comparison-contrast or cause-effect relationships. Furthermore, the findings revealed that graphic novel greatly shaped and influenced the critical thinking and literary devices, and vocabulary learning skills of participants. The present study calls for integrating graphic novels into the syllabi of the relevant schools as these materials appeal to the students' visual senses and yield more insights compared with traditional plain literary texts.

Keywords: Graphic novels; literary texts; critical thinking; EFL; motivation

1. Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) has always been a painful process for teachers due to the factors that inhibit a healthy learning environment free from "affective filters" and empowered by motivation. In seeking the best way to teach a second or foreign language (L2) with the rising demand of language learning in a short period of time, a wide variety of interpretations and applications have come up. Marckwardt (1972, p.5) called this duration of searching for the best method for language teaching as "changing winds and shifting sands" since every quarter of a century, a new approach appeared and each new approach or method escaped from the old but took with it some of the positive aspects of the previous practice. Thus, the use of visuals has been one of the positive outcomes of the previously applied methodologies that have never lost their effective role in language teaching. Indeed, using visuals has always had a facilitative power in the process of language learning and become an indispensable part of it.

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When first introducing the term "graphic novel", Eisner (1985) defined it as "sequential art, the arrangement of pictures or images and world to narrate a story or dramatize an idea" (p. 5), arguing that graphic novels have the potent to improve the L2 skills of learners struggling with foreign language learning. Reasonably, the illustrations in the novels support readers by providing them with the necessary contextual clues that appeal to their senses through imagery techniques. Emphasising the benefits of graphic novels for young EFL learners or those who have lower reading levels compared to their peers, Krashen (2004b, pp. 59-60) states that "the simple sentences, visual or context clues, and educated guessing allow them to comprehend some, if not all, of the story". This assertion suggests that a taste for reading can be developed through reading light materials such as comic books.

Similarly, Schwarz (2006) points out that graphic novels sharpen and deepen visual literacy. Derrick (2008) maintains that a graphic novel is the combination of written text and visual literacy, including the visual symbols and shorthand that comics use to represent the physical world. Consequently, EFL teachers can easily use graphic novels in their classrooms. Bearing in mind that an EFL teachers' goal is also to teach EFL reading so as to develop learners' reading skills in terms of understanding grammar, vocabulary and inferential deduction, reading is considered an essential part of L2 instruction. However, language learners have become too reluctant to read, understand, analyze and synthesize these days since there are distracters such as console games. Yet, it is not too late to reshape the young reader again. Knowing the fact that the modern students are fond of computer games which include all the visual images that appeal to their senses, teachers should benefit from this opportunity by engaging their students in reading texts with graphics.

Needless to say, L2 instruction is also based on the productive skills-speaking and writing – and receptive skills – reading and listening. Success in all these four skills can be achieved through the use of graphic novels. Graphic novels play a very significant role in both foreign language education and one's life because they enhance comprehension, vocabulary and language skills, as well as critical thinking skills that can be applied to other areas where productive skills are needed. Learners properly introduced to reading materials could develop their metacognitive strategies as to become autonomous learners and eventually successful self-actualized individuals (Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1987). Therefore, it has become the urge of teachers to build up these skills in the best and most permanent ways. It has always been teachers' aim to create the successful language learner and many teachers and experts have conducted many kinds of studies to find an applicable strategy or method. Thus, this study was designed to investigate the role of graphic novels in teaching English as a foreign language.

2.   Literature Review

2.1.   *Graphic Novels and Foreign Language Learning*

Researchers within educational circles use various definitions for a graphic novel. Weiner (2010, p. 5) refers to it as "sequential art, comics, photo-novels, graphics, paperback comics novels (whatever name one wants to use)" whereas Cary (2004) describes it as "the longer cousin of the comic book" (p.10). He further states that "graphic novels span many literary genres and are often full-length books containing many of the literary elements that are found in the traditional text-only books such as novels'' (p.11). Similarly, Carter (2004) defines it as "a book-length sequential art narrative featuring an anthology style collection of comic art, a collection of reprinted comic book issues comprising a single story line (or arc) or an original, stand-alone graphic narrative" (p.1). Notwithstanding its various descriptions, graphic novels serve as visual tools to motivate readers with illustrations.

Graphic novels are also recognized as a very supportive medium for visual learners since they link images with texts to increase comprehension (Hassett and Schiebe, 2007). Also, students can decode

unfamiliar vocabulary items with the scaffolding effect of the visual context clues (Pennella, 2009). Thus, what reluctant L2 learners definitely need is the graphic novel to boost up their reading skills. Graphic novels are undoubtedly read for fun and it seems reasonable to give students the opportunity of extensive reading since it would be unrealistic and unwise to force a person to read something that does not appeal to his/her interest and the same counts for a teenager as s/he will always be willing to look at comics (Goldsmith, 2005). Furthermore, graphic novels certainly appeal to the senses of visual learners. Given that young learners at a younger age are more exposed to illustrations so that they can learn better, it is not unreasonable when graphic novels are accepted and recognized as a bridge for the transition to written texts (Gorman, 2003).

On the other hand, graphic novels can serve as a means for presenting sociocultural issues in language learning. For example, *The Four Immigrants Manga* (Kiyama, 1999) depicts the life of four Japanese immigrants in San Francisco, California from 1904 to 1924. Not only is this graphic novel funny to read, but it also gives the reader deeper insight and understanding of the struggles of these immigrants in terms of economic and social issues. EFL learners reading these types of novels could learn language and culture simultaneously.

Integrating graphic novels into the reading syllabus is viewed as one of the most applicable scaffolding types by many experts in the field of ELT. Krashen's (2004a) *Comprehension Hypothesis* (CH) adds additional perspective on the issue of whether and how to use the student's first language in foreign language education. Based on Krashen's CH conceptualization, the information provided in the first language can help the same way pictures and realia help make input comprehensible, supporting the use of graphic novels with L2 students. Krashen (2004b) too maintains that graphic narrative materials are an excellent means of reducing the affective filters of anxiety and lack of confidence blocking student pleasure in learning L2. He further indicates that they can spark student interest, thus, increasing L2 acquisition and invigorating kids to become autonomous acquirers. Briefly, graphic novels have proved to enhance L2 acquisition by removing some psychological obstacles such as affective filters that might moderate on effective language learning.

2.2. Graphic Novels and Motivation

Motivation is one of the most important psychological reasons for a student's reaction and behavior in terms of both engagement in and resentment of an activity during English lessons (Dörnyei, 2005). Using graphic novels in English classes could trigger students' intrinsic motivation. Students do not feel forced to read something, study it and be successful in the exam. However, kids love comics and they never feel forced when looking at the pages. They enjoy solving problems and carrying out the required skills. When students start to learn because of their intrinsic motivation, they will definitely benefit both academic success and fun. Hence, graphic novels contribute to the four perspectives of intrinsic motivation which are *competence, curiosity, autonomy,* and *internalized motivation* (Carr, 2004; Harmer, 2001; Rubin, 1975).

According to Cary (2004), English learners "may find clues in the pictures that help demystify the text and increase comprehension" (p. 3). With this overpowering feeling of competence, they become more motivated as they start to believe that they can make competent language learners. Similarly, Rubin (1975) points out that "the good language learner may be a good guesser, that is, he gathers information in an efficient manner so it can be easily retrieved and that he may actively look for clues to meaning-in the topic, setting, or attitudes of the speakers" (p.43). Graphic novels are shorter and have more illustrations than words which may draw the students' curiosity so that they will approach the task more eagerly. Likewise, illustrations are far better in showing hints and clues than words. This makes students

feel more engaged in the story. Therefore, raising curiosity through graphic novels has the potential to shape language learners willingness to undertake leaning tasks.

Children are assumed to be willing to read the graphic novels and have the feeling of independency while going over the script and illustrations. This can play a vital role in transferring them into autonomous learners. Students can infer hidden messages, guess meanings of vocabulary through pictures and get an overall idea about what the novel is without asking the teacher or constantly looking up the words. This feeling of independency and autonomy is crucial to educational effectiveness and empowers learners, providing them with the necessary impetus to master the language on their own. Harmer (2001) points out that "intrinsic motivation plays by far the largest part in most students' success or failure as language learners" (p.4). Calo (2010) argues that by reading graphic novels, engaging in rich analytical discussions, and participating in activities that further extend and deepen students' understanding of the texts, all students learn to be strategic readers and critical consumers of information. Thus, graphic novels can be used as a tool for teaching English and empowering the learner with language skills, as well as dealing with social issues.

2.3. Graphic Novels and Language Learning Strategies

It is true that graphic novels function as a scaffold and that they ease understanding, promote guessing and linking words to possible meanings. Yet, this might not be sufficient to achieve optimum success. Students will get completely autonomous when they are taught to build up their own learning strategies. This can be achieved by using graphic novels as their illustrations will promote the learners' usage and competence of language learning strategies, defined as "external skills often used consciously by students to improve their learning" (Ellis, 1978, p. 9) and "easier to teach and modify" (Oxford, 1990, p. 12). Thus, if teachers use the appropriate lesson materials and assign students useful tasks, students will be more successful.

Graphic novels support students in building up language learning strategies. Students will find it easier to understand graphic novels and because of the illustrated situations and dialogues they will be able to focus on the learning strategies that the teacher presents them. All students regardless of their proficiency levels in reading can participate in discussions about the visuals within the novel. In this regards, Calo (2010) asserts that "graphic novels can help the learners to become strategic readers in pre-reading, while reading and post-reading activities". She further points out that the students can "develop new insights, think deeply, carefully and critically about what they see an read, make interpretations, pose and answer questions and think and act creatively" (p.8). These skills can be mastered by going through the pages and observing the illustrations in graphic novels.

On the other hand, graphic novels are also excellent materials to build up cognitive learning strategies (O'Malley et al., 1985) because there are lots of tasks to be carried out that involve problem solving, analysis, transformation or synthesising. Students can do activities based on *clarification/verification, guessing/inductive, inferencing, deductive reasoning, practice, memorization* and *monitoring* (Rubin, 1987). In addition, comics establish an opportunity to practice metacognitive learning strategies because they sparkle autonomy in such a way that the learners get involved in a variety of processes such as *"planning, prioritising, setting goals, and self-management"* (Rubin, 1987).

2.4. Graphic Novels and Learner Types

Many factors such as gender, age, social status, motivation, attitude, background or culture play a significant role in language learning. These factors mark individual differences and make a person unique. Therefore, using graphic novels can arouse interest in most students as these types of materials

appeal to various learning styles such as the *auditory learner, visual learner, tactile learner, kinaesthetic learner, group learner* and *individual learner*. A tactile learner, for instance, can easily draw a comic strip about the theme that takes place in the graphic novel. Likewise, the tactile learner can build a small model of the setting taking place in the graphic novel. Furthermore, some actions of the graphic novel can even be acted out. Using graphic novels, teachers can easily engage their students in tasks by getting them to prepare interviews, do role plays or pantomime some facial expressions of the characters in the graphic novel.

Graphic novels also appeal to both *group learners* and *individual learners* (Reid, 1995). Given the different types of learners and learning styles, it becomes a more challenging task for teachers to reach and appeal to all types of learners. However, Graphic Novels aid learning in that they can provide basis for all learner types. Graphic novels appeal to the individual differences as they include visuals and texts that draw the attention of the verbal and visual learners. Furthermore, these visual texts can be mimed or played by spatial and kinaesthetic learners as well. These individual differences play a significant role in L2 reading comprehension or other skills.

2.5. Studies Done on Graphic Novels in Language Teaching

Graphic novels have changed considerably over the years. Studies conducted so far to explore the nature of foreign language learning and its problems have pointed out and highlighted the necessity of integrating them into language learning programs. For instance, Jones (2010) conducted a study to rate Japanese students' attitudes towards reading in both their L1 and English. The findings of Jones' study indicated that using comic books had an overall positive effect on the students. The results of post-project survey were also promising. 11 out of 25 participants claimed that the use of illustrations was very helpful in acquiring the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary, while 12 participants indicated that they had experienced no changes in their attitudes. However, they pointed out that they had enjoyed the graphic novels and, as a result, were highly motivated to read more books in English. In this respect, Jones (2010) asserts that contextual illustrations and context help enable participants' schema formation and general comprehension of text. This implies that schema formation results in less reliance on distracting dictionary use and, hence, less split attention effect.

Frey and Fisher (2004) explored the effect of graphic novels on the improvement of the written communication of students from divergent backgrounds and found that the students began to write more complex sentences, and that the mean sentence length increased from 11.2 to 12.89 words, yielding high levels of self-confidence and self-reliance among students. Referring to *Manga* specifically, Carter (2007, p. 50), observes that "Manga is to teachers today what music videos were a generation ago: something of import to students that we shouldn't ignore, even if we might not ever 'get' it".

Numerous studies (Krashen, 2004b; Worthy, 1996, and Worthy et al., 1999) report that when adolescents choose materials that truly interest them and read for pleasure, the benefits include gains in vocabulary, reading fluency, a greater effort, motivation, and a more positive attitude towards reading. Although the study on Graphic Novels is mainly confined to its usage in FL, it cannot be denied that Graphic Novels have the power to motivate and thus create a feeling as if the students were reading voluntarily or freely. Thus, Krashen (2004c) suggests that parents and teachers should create opportunities and "provide access to light reading such as comic books, and graphic novels" (2004c, p. 134). He further points out that current comic books have 2.000 words each and that a student will have covered 500.000 words yearly (if read daily).

Despite research studies done on graphic novels so far, there still exists an empirical research gap in the field of ELT in Turkey. Given that graphical novels have the potential to promote teaching and learning English as a foreign language, the researchers felt obliged to conduct an empirical study and

determine possible effects of graphic novels on foreign language learning. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the role of graphic novels in foreign language teaching. For these purposes, the following research questions were formulated:

1) What are the students' perceptions of the role of graphic novels and literary graphic novels in foreign language teaching?

2) Is there a significant difference between experimental and control groups' performance in reading graphic novels?

3) Considering the role of graphic novels and literary graphic novels in EFL, are there any differences between experimental and control groups?

4) Do the groups differ significantly in terms of a) critical thinking skills and literary devices, (b) vocabulary learning skills, and (c) reading and writing skills?

3. Method

This study used a mixed-methods research design, a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study to understand a research problem (Cresswell, 2009). Mixed method approach combines the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research, thus providing more insight about the problem (Dörnyei, 2007). In this section, participants, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis procedures are presented.

3.1. Participants

A total of 56 10th grade International Baccalaureate (IB) students enrolled in TED Ankara College Foundation Private High School participated in the study. Two intact 10th grade classes were randomly assigned to the control (N=30) and experimental (N=26) groups. Their age ranged from 15 to 16 and had the same English proficiency level, as the school requires a final grade of "4" out of "5" in English in Prep-IB grade 9 to continue in Prep-IB 10. Also, students were familiar with literature as the school's English curriculum mainly involved literature teaching, aligned with the IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) program.

3.2. Instrument

The study sequentially used three instruments for data collection: a questionnaire, semi-structured interview and achievement test (post-test). A survey instrument was employed to gather quantitative data about the participants' reading preferences, habits and familiarity with graphic novels. It included 37 five-point Likert type items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was adapted and further developed from English's (2012) graphic novel questionnaire. The necessary adaptations were made in the inventory to meet the requirements of the study. An exploratory factor analysis using varimax rotation was conducted to statistically determine the quality of items and the construct validity of the scale. The result of Barlett's Test of Sphericity (P<0.01) confirmed that the scale was appropriate for the factor analysis. The original scale contained 47 items. After factor analysis, the items with a factor load value <.27 were removed from the analysis. In other words, item numbers 4, 5., 7., 33., and 34 which had a factor load value <.27 were removed from the scale. Cronbach's alpha for the 37 item scale was .82. Moreover, prior to the main study, a pilot study was carried out with a group of 59 (N=59) students in order to foster its reliability. The pilot study showed that the scale was clear enough for the students to understand. Additionally, a semi-structured interview consisting of 7 questions was conducted with the participants in the experimental group to

find out how they felt about their experience of reading the graphic novel Macbeth, and whether they would also want to experience it in the future. Finally, a post-test consisting of 10 questions was administered. Each question was aimed to test a specific aspect of the play.

3.3. Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this study were gathered using a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview followed by a post-test in TED Ankara College Foundation Private High School. Both control and experimental groups were randomly chosen as they were all confirmed to have a proficiency level of 4 (70-84 out of 100) in English. The treatment began along quantitative data collection and lasted for five weeks, namely 15 hours in total. During the process of reading, both the control end experimental group did the same pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities. After the treatment, the second quantitative data was collected. A semi-structured interview was administrated to the experimental group. This study attempted to find out some more sincere explanations of the participants' attitudes, awareness and preferences of reading literature. More information about the participants' profiles was obtained through structured interview. The interview questions were structured parallel to the sections in the questionnaire. There were 7 questions in English addressing the participants' preferences of reading texts and reading graphic novels in class. The participants did not have any difficulties in understanding the questions and the interview was thus accepted to be satisfying. The post-test was given to both groups. There was no pre-test as two intact classes were chosen. In other words, 'the post-test-only two randomized experimental' design was used for data collection here. The scores of post-test representing the general achievement of the participants in reading graphic novels were computed and evaluated based on the following dimensions: *Knowledge of Symbolic Meaning, Knowledge of Setting, Understanding of Foreshadowing, Understanding of Inference, Vocabulary Skills, Comprehension Skills, Understanding of Quotations, Compare/Contrast Skills, Cause and Effect Skills,* and *Understanding of Concept.*

Data analysis was performed to address the research questions formulated for the present study. Data collected from the sample were fed into the computer and statistical analyses were carried out using MS Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics 20. The Independent Samples t-test was run to compare the experimental and control groups' performance. The independent-samples t-test is employed when the two groups or sets of scores whose means are being compared are independent of each other (Mackey and Gass, 2005; Field, 2009). To characterize and analyze the data drawn from the sample and provide preliminary information about the participants' ratings, descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency and percentage were also computed.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the current study in terms of descriptive and inferential statistics as well as analysis of the findings. First, the descriptive results of participants' perceptions on the effectiveness of graphic novels are given, followed by inferential statistics representing the results of using graphic novels in foreign language learning.

The results of descriptive analysis for the participants' attitudes towards literary texts revealed that students tend to have a positive approach towards reading in the target language. The results further indicated that the highest mean score (M=4.26; SD=0.90) was obtained for item 2, suggesting that more than 9 in ten (92.30%) of the participants perceive that reading literary texts, stories and novels raises and shapes their critical awareness, whereas the lowest mean score (M=2.22; SD=1.12) was received for item 16 (Table 1). The close examination of the results showed that only 19.23% had difficulty understanding literary texts, while 61.50% found it easy to understand them. This implies that using

graphic novels makes the reading tasks and understanding of the literary texts easier and ultimately contributes, to a great extent, to better language learning.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics for approach towards reading literary texts*

Item	Item Description	N	Mean[a]	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	I enjoy reading literary texts/stories/novels.	26	3.89	0.97	0	1	5	13	7
2	Literary texts / stories and novels shape people's critical awareness.	26	4.26	0.90	0	0	2	12	12
8	I find reading literary texts/stories/ novels difficult.	26	2.48	1.19	5	10	4	6	1
9	I can understand problematic words which a lot of people find hard to understand and remember while reading literary texts.	26	3.07	1.17	1	8	6	8	3
11	I might find it easy to interpret gesture/facial expression in a graphic novel.	26	3.33	1.18	1	5	6	10	4
13	I can understand what literary texts are about when I read them.	25	3.96	1.00	0	1	4	12	8
14	I can easily catch contextual connection to the written texts while reading graphic novels.	26	3.37	1.11	1	3	9	9	4
16	I find it hard to understand literary texts.	26	2.22	1.12	8	8	5	5	0
21	I have to look up for the meanings of the words quite often while reading a text.	26	3.07	1.04	2	4	8	12	0
25	I find reading literary texts/stories/ novels boring.	26	2.44	1.09	4	11	6	4	1
26	I don't feel confident while reading plain literary texts.	26	2.74	1.16	3	8	8	5	2
27	I can't remember the events and details in a text easily after having read a literary text.	26	2.41	1.01	3	13	6	3	1
30	I like reading literary texts without illustrations.	26	3.15	1.20	2	4	10	6	4
36	In a dialogue/text, I can easily recognize the meanings of the words.	26	3.44	1.19	1	3	9	7	6
37	I have no difficulty in interpreting gesture/ facial expression described in a story.	26	3.48	0.98	0	2	11	9	4

[a]*Means are based on a 5-point scale: 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3 Neither agree nor disagree; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.*

Regarding the participants' perception of reading comics and graphic novels, the results of descriptive analysis revealed that although students tend to have a positive approach towards reading comics and graphic novels, the mean scores obtained for the items were low in comparison to their perceptions of reading literary texts (Table 2). The results indicated that the highest mean score (M=3.85; SD=0.95) was obtained for item 33. This indicates that nearly 70% of the students perceive that illustrations in a graphic novel help them remember the events and details in a literary text. Conversely, the lowest mean scores were received for items 15 (M=2.22; SD=.97) and 3 (M=2.62; SD=1.20). As item 15 is a reversed-coded item, this indicates that only 7% of the participants do not enjoy reading texts with visuals, while 54% of them enjoy reading them. Surprising as it may seem, 50% of them (M=2.62; SD=1.20) stated that they did not usually read comics, and 26.92% were neutral. Thus, only 23.18% were familiar with such materials. These findings showed that a great majority of the students did not read any comics at all.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics for participants' perception of reading comics and graphic novels*

Item	Item Description	N	Mean[a]	SD	1	2	3	4	5
3	I usually read comics.	25	2.62	1.20	3	10	7	2	3
6	I can easily pick up meanings illustrated by visuals.	25	3.58	0.95	0	2	7	13	3

7	I like studying texts with visuals.	25	3.69	1.16	1	0	10	6	8
15	I don't enjoy reading texts with visuals.	26	2.22	0.97	7	7	10	2	0
18	Literary texts/stories/ novels would be more appealing with pictures/ graphics.	26	3.59	1.25	0	6	4	8	8
19	I would like to read a graphic novel instead of a plain literary novel.	26	3.33	1.14	2	1	11	8	4
20	Graphic novels enhance students' critical awareness.	26	3.63	0.93	0	1	9	12	4
24	I can diagnose the literary meanings of words with / in visuals.	26	3.41	0.84	0	2	10	13	1
28	I can find out the literary meanings in visuals.	26	3.63	0.88	0	0	11	11	4
29	Reading a novel illustrated by pictures/graphics sounds fun.	26	3.67	1.27	3	0	3	14	6
31	Graphic novels may challenge me to think how stories, true and fictive, are told and unfold.	26	3.22	0.89	1	1	14	9	1
33	Illustrations in a graphic novel help me remember the events and details in a literary text.	26	3.85	0.95	0	0	8	11	7
34	I like associating pictures with the dialogues in a text.	26	3.35	0.98	0	3	11	8	3

[a]Means are based on a 5-point scale: 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3 Neither agree nor disagree; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

As for the familiarity with comics and graphic novels, the results of descriptive analysis revealed greater discrepancy among the participants. The results, as shown in Table 3, demonstrated that the highest mean score (M=3.59; SD=.89) was ascribed to item 32 (a reverse-coded item), suggesting that nearly seven in ten (61.53%) of the participants were not familiar with graphic novels, while only 3.84% were familiar with those novels. In contrast, the lowest mean score (M=1.19; SD=.48) was observed in item 12. None of the participants agreed with the statement and 96.16% of the students said that they had not had the opportunity to read the Pulitzer-prize winning holocaust narrative "Maus".

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics for familiarity with comics and graphic novels*

Item	Item Description	N	Mean[a]	SD	1	2	3	4	5
4	I know that graphic novels show "tolerance and respect for other people and cultures."	26	3.04	0.98	2	1	17	4	2
5	I know the difference between comics and graphic novels.	26	2.37	1.08	7	5	10	4	0
10	I know what "manga" means.	26	2.89	1.67	8	4	2	5	7
12	I've read the Pulitzer-prize winning holocaust narrative "Maus".	26	1.19	0.48	22	3	1	0	0
17	I know that graphic novels are about issues such as racism, war, poverty, and gender rights.	26	2.89	1.22	2	8	9	3	4
22	I've seen a graphic novel.	26	2.85	1.35	5	5	6	7	3
23	I can name and suggest some famous graphic novels.	26	2.07	1.21	11	7	2	6	0
32	I'm not familiar with graphic novels.	26	3.59	0.89	0	1	9	13	3
35	I've never read a graphic novel.	26	3.15	1.23	1	7	8	5	5

[a]Means are based on a 5-point scale: 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3 Neither agree nor disagree; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

Given the results of descriptive analyses regarding the participants' perceptions of the three factors examined in the study, i.e., approach towards reading literary texts , reading comics and graphic novels, and familiarity with comics and graphic novels, it can be concluded that the students had positive attitudes towards reading in general. They believed that reading is central for language learning as it shapes their knowledge, way of thinking and appreciation of the world. On the other hand, it is quite obvious that a great majority of them were not familiar with graphic novels. However, the results showed that they were willing to experience one.

The results of qualitative data analysis indicated that the majority of the participants enjoyed reading the graphic novel version of *Macbeth*, believed in its advantages and were willing to experience a graphic novel again. Before introducing the graphic novel, a large number (51.54%) of students stated that they were not familiar with Graphic Novels and 9 students (34.62%) were neutral. After their experience with *Macbeth*, however, a great majority of students perceived graphic novels as entertaining and beneficial in terms of understanding the plot, characters, setting and helping them to imagine and remember the story. The interview results showed that the students had become familiar with the graphic novels and also believed that the use of graphic novels would help them better understand literary devices.

To compare the performance of the students, both control and experimental groups, in dimensions of reading the graphic novel and plain text of the play *Macbeth*, a post-test was administered. The results of t-test revealed significant differences between experimental (M=7.42; SD=1.41) and control (M=6.24; SD=1.24) groups in their *knowledge of symbolic meaning*, $t(54)=2.309, p=0.025, p<0.05$, *knowledge of setting*, experimental group (M=8.04; SD=.916) and control group (M=5.47; SD=.973), $t(54)=6.194, p=0.000, p<0.05$, *understanding of foreshadowing*, experimental group (M=8.08; SD=.744) and control group (M=6.87; SD=.937), $t(54)=5.294, p=0.000, p<0.05$, *understanding of inference*, experimental group (M=7.62; SD=.941) and control group (M=6.53; SD=1.07, $t(54)=3.979$, p=0.000, p<0.05, and finally in *vocabulary skills*, experimental group (M=9.35; SD=1.04) and control group (M=7.20; SD=2.88, $t(38.670)=5.227$, p=0.000, p<0.05. However, no significant difference was found between experimental and control groups with respect to their *comprehension skills*, $t(54)=1.31$, p=0.195, p>0.05, *understanding of quotations*, $t(54)=1.122$, p=0.267, p>0.05, *compare/contrast skills*, $t(54)=-0.194$, p=0.847, p>0.05, *cause and effect skills*, $t(54)=-1.731$, p=0.890, p>0.05, and *understanding of concept*, $t(54)=1.109$, p=0.272, p>0.05 (Table 4).

Table 4. *Comparison of experimental and control groups' performance in dimensions of reading graphic novel*

Areas of EFL	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Knowledge of Symbolic Meaning	Experimental	26	7.42	1.41	2.309	54	0.025
	Control	30	6.24	1.24			
Knowledge of Setting	Experimental	26	8.04	.91	6.194	54	0.000
	Control	30	5.47	.97			
Understanding of Foreshadowing	Experimental	26	8.08	.74	5.294	54	0.000
	Control	30	6.87	.93			
Understanding of Inference	Experimental	26	7.62	.94	3.979	54	0.000
	Control	30	6.53	1.07			
Vocabulary Skills	Experimental	26	9.35	1.04	6.255	39.700	0.000
	Control	30	7.20	2.88			
Comprehension Skills	Experimental	26	7.85	.92	1.131	54	0.195
	Control	30	7.53	.86			
Understanding of Quotations	Experimental	26	7.23	1.24	1.122	54	0.267
	Control	30	6.90	.96			
Compare/Contrast Skills	Experimental	26	7.38	1.09	-0.194	54	0.847
	Control	30	7.43	.77			
Cause and Effect Skills	Experimental	26	7.31	1.12	-1.731	54	0.890
	Control	30	7.77	.85			
Understanding of Concept	Experimental	26	7.46	.85	1.109	54	0.272
	Control	30	7.23	.67			

*Significant at 0.05 level

The results, as determined by t-test, indicated that there was statistically significant differences, t(54)=3.379, p=0.001, p<0.05, between experimental (M=28.73; SD=5.43) and control (M=26.43; SD=4.92) groups in the role of graphic novels in EFL. By the same token, the results revealed a significant difference, t (54) =4.810, p=0.000, p<0.05, between experimental (M=23.54; SD=2.76) and control (M=19.93; SD=2.83) groups in relation to the role of literary graphic novels in foreign language teaching. Likewise, the results demonstrated that there was a significant difference, t (54) =4.840,

p=0.000, p<0.05, between critical thinking skills and literary devices of experimental group (M=23.54; SD=2.76) and critical thinking skills and literary devices of control group (M=23.54; SD=2.76). Also, a significant difference, t (38.670) =5.227, p=0.000, p<0.05, was found between vocabulary learning of experimental group (M=8.35; SD=.84) control group (M=6.10; SD=2.17). The results of participants' overall performance indicated that there was a significant difference between experimental group (MD=76.73, SD=8.43) and the control group (M=69.43, SD=7.72), suggesting that the experimental group outperformed control group in reading the Graphic Novel Macbeth and performing related tasks. However, the findings of the t-test showed no significant difference, t (54) =0.350, p=0.365, p>0.05, between reading comprehension and writing skills of experimental and those of control group.

Table 5. *The Role of graphic novels in EFL*

Variables	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
The Role of Graphic Novels in EFL	Experimental	26	28.73	5.43	5.379	54	0.001
	Control	30	26.43	4.92			
The Role of Literary Graphic Novels in EFL	Experimental	26	23.54	2.76	4.810	54	0.000
	Control	30	19.93	2.83			
The Role of Graphic Novels in Reading / Writing	Experimental	26	27.23	4.51	0.350	54	0.365
	Control	30	36.87	3.34			
The Role of Graphic Novels in critical thinking / literary devices	Experimental	26	27.23	4.51	4.840	54	0.000
	Control	30	26.47	3.71			
The Role of Graphic Novels in Vocabulary Skills	Experimental	26	8.35	.84	5.227	38.670	0.000
	Control	30	6.10	2.17			
Overall Achievement in Reading Graphic Novels	Experimental	26	76.73	8.43	3.379	54	0.001
	Control	30	69.43	7.72			

*Significant at 0.05 level

Drawing upon the statistical analyses of the post-test data and the results of analyses regarding the role of graphic novels in various areas of foreign language teaching and learning it can be concluded that:

- The graphic novel played a significant role in understanding 1) literature such as symbol, setting and foreshadowing, 2) inference, and 3) vocabulary.

- The graphic novel did not play a significant role in answering comprehension questions, discussing quotations, analyzing compare/contrast or cause/ effect relationships. In other words, the graphic novel did not play a significant role in empowering reading and writing skills. However, the scores in these areas proved to be successful as well.

- The findings also revealed that the use of graphic novel was overall effective in foreign language teaching.

- The findings showed that the literary graphic novel *Macbeth* was also effective in learning English as a foreign language.

- The results regarding critical thinking skills and literary devices conveyed that the graphic novel played a significant role in teaching English as a foreign language.

- The results showed the undeniable role of the graphic novel in vocabulary learning.

- When considering all the outcomes altogether, one simple result of significance can be deduced. The role of the graphic novel in teaching English as a foreign language is the *motivation* that it provides for the students. The motivation brought about by recognizing and understanding Graphic Novels made learning possible for all the students.

There is a strong body of evidence in the literature (Tuncer, 1993; Chun and Plass 1997; Fiske, 1999; Ruggieri, 2002; Schwarz, 2002; Krashen, 2004c; Penella, 2008; Callahan, 2009, Jones, 2010; Frey, 2010) that suggests that the use of graphic novels rather than the plain texts has the potential to contribute, to a large extent, to foreign language teaching and learning. Tuncer's (1993) study, for instance, unfolded the reasons why children favour reading graphic novels. The present study also revealed that the participants developed positive feelings regarding graphic novels and showed their willingness to read even more.

Moreover, the findings showed higher scores because they thought illustrations to be useful in the retrieval process. In the same vein, Chun and Plass (1997) explained that readers of books could retrieve and visualize words or produce definitions easily when they remembered a corresponding visual retrieval clue such as pictures. In addition, Fiske's (1999) report points out that texts enriched with art and culture engage students. The same effect could be seen in the current study as well since the students felt highly motivated during the reading classes and shared their opinions during the interview.

The results of the present study revealed that graphic novels played a significant role in the enhancement of participants' critical thinking skills in the English classroom since they scored quite high in questions requiring critical thinking. It was also found, during the interview process, that illustrations had helped them a lot in developing critical thinking among participants. By the same token, Ruggieri (2002) showed that students could go beyond ordinary reasoning, suggesting that the use of graphic novels improved critical thinking skills among students.

The findings also indicated that through the study of graphic novels, the participants could gain a good understanding of themes and characterization. The importance of setting in terms of historical background was also highlighted by the participants. Not only did the post-test scores indicate the students' knowledge on these issues, but also their self-report and their responses during the interview showed a similar attitude. Likewise, Schwarz (2002) showed that reading graphic novels provided the opportunity to have fruitful speaking classes about social issues, culture and human life in general.

The findings of this study did not reveal any relationship between graphic novels and writing skills. In other words, after weeks of treatment, the results showed no instances of improvement in participants' writing skills, whereas some other studies (Frey and Fisher, 2004) showed that graphic novels improved writing skills. Although the current study did not show a significant differences in the cause-effect (experimental group (M=7.31); control group (M=7.77) or compare-contrast (experimental group (M=7,38, control group (M=7,43)) type of writing styles, the scores were high enough to be accepted as satisfying since the means were very close.

Krashen (2004c) suggests that students should read graphic novels as they reduce the affective filters and promote pleasure in learning that results in students becoming autonomous acquirers. The current study also demonstrated that students became motivated and willing to participate in the lessons. Penella (2008) argues that graphic novels help students accomplish success in vocabulary by using images to support words. She further states that students may derive meanings of unfamiliar words, through pictures associated with that particular panel. The present study (post-test) also showed that the students were more successful in the vocabulary part. Likewise, the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis indicated that the students felt more comfortable in learning vocabulary as the pictures functioned as a scaffolding.

The participants of the present study rated more positively in the literary types of questions. Similarly, Callahan (2009) showed that 64% of the teachers have positive attitudes towards using graphic novels in English classes. Frey (2010) suggests that graphic novels promote students' understanding of literary devices and thus aids writing. Finally, Jones (2010) found that contextual

illustrations and context help students' schema formation and general comprehension of text. This finding can be supported by the present study as it also suggests that the participants developed a better understanding and skill to infer implications of the text.

To sum up, this study showed that the graphic novel study was a success. The graphic novel played an important role in increasing reading motivation by stimulating visual reading. It also increased participation in the reading classes as the students were more involved in literature discussions and able to function independently during the reading of *Macbeth*. Due to the visual clues, the students' motivation increased and resulted in a better understanding and appreciation of literature. As a consequence, the students' reading stamina improved and they became more autonomous readers. On the whole, language is related to words and since it is believed that a picture is worth a thousand words and the use of graphic novels brought along many benefits, graphic novels should be considered as a useful material in the foreign language teaching process and thus be implemented in the syllabi of similar schools.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of graphic novels in English language teaching. The target population was the learners of TED Ankara College Foundation Private High. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant difference of achievement in reading graphic novels between the control and experimental group. Although it was found that graphic novels had a positive role in learning the target language in general, it was also seen that they play an important role in shaping one's language. The results further revealed that the students showed more success in the interpretation of the literary devices and techniques. The students that used the graphic novel could easily recognize the foreshadowing, symbolic language, comment on the setting and infer deeper meaning. Thus, graphic novels should be implemented as literary reading materials and teachers can be urged to prepare more materials on literature. Although the effects of the traditional way of teaching prose and using literary texts cannot be surely denied, the introduction of graphic novel and its implementation has brought an undebatable effect as well.

Graphic novels foster students' motivation to a great extent. They can also easily discourage the student in reading when a graphic novel does not meet a certain criteria. The teacher should be careful in choosing the graphic novel as it must be organized, easy to follow, not too long, and appeal to the age and level of the students. The graphic novel in this study motivated the students to a great extent and, thus, a significant difference between the control group and experimental group could be seen. The lower scores in the control group happened just because the students were reluctant in reading the plain text of the play. Furthermore, the themes and concepts of both reading texts and graphic novels should meet the students' intellectual maturity; otherwise, the students would get lost in all the words or pictures and would end up having not learned or benefitted at all. Last but not least, graphic novels can be taught in foreign language teaching departments at universities, and pre-service teacher trainees can be informed about the use of graphic novels.

This research was administrated in a private high school in Turkey. Further studies in state schools, especially on students with less proficiency in English might provide more useful insights. Instead of using a literary graphic novel, another type of graphic novel can also be used. *Macbeth's* level was very challenging as it was exposed in Shakespearean language. Thus, simpler language style could be used instead. A graphic novel with more illustrations, less text or graphic novels about certain historical issues are examples among a long list of variety future researchers can conduct studies on. Finally, with smaller groups graphic novel reading hours could be implemented during elective courses chosen only by volunteers with high motivation. Students will have the opportunity to do the reading both at home and

in class and then discuss the graphic novels with their peers with less guidance from the teacher. In that sense a study of the effect on voluntarily reading with graphic novels can be carried out.

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Çizgi Romanlar: İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretiminde alternatif bir yaklaşım

Öz

Bu çalışma TED Ankara Koleji Vakfı Özel Lisesi Uluslararası Bakalorya öğrencileri (15-16 yaş) için İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretiminde çizgi romanların rolünü inceleyen bir araştırmanın bulgularını sunmaktadır. Daha önce herhangi bir çizgi roman çalışması yapmayan 10uncu sınıf öğrencileri "Macbeth" oyununu çeşitli sınıf içi etkinliklerle çalışmak üzere kontrol ve deney grupları olarak rastgele seçilmişlerdir. Katılımcılardan veri toplamak amacıyla anket, yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat ve başarı testi (son test) kullanılmıştır. Kontrol grubu ve deney grubu bulguları çizgi romanların (i) sembol, uzam ve izlek gibi anlatım yöntemlerini anlama, (ii) çıkarım yapma ve (iii) kelime bilgisi gibi alanlarda önemli farklılıklar göstermiştir. Fakat okuduğunu anlama etkinliklerinde, alıntıları tartışmada, karşılaştırma ve neden-sonuç ilişkilerinin analizinde önemli farklılıklar görülmemiştir. Ayrıca, çizgi romanların kritik düşünme ve anlatım yöntemleri analiz becerisini ve kelime bilgilerini önemli ölçüde etkilediği ve şekillendirdiği bulunmuştur. Bu çalışma çizgi romanların öğrencilerin görsel duyusuna hitap etmesi ve geleneksel edebi eserlerle karşılaştırıldığında daha verimli olduğunu ve bu romanların ilgili okul müfredatlarıyla bütünleştirilebileceğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Çizgi roman, edebi eserler, eleştirel düşünme, İngilizce öğretimi, motivasyon

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